

Harrisburg Oct 16th 46

I have mislaid a full sheet I had written you. If this be a proper continuation of the thought it contained, I shall be proud of my memory. I tried to answer your expressions of loving faith in the instant operations of Divine power, by proposing a sort of medium via; God fixing laws from the beginning & working presently but incessantly himself, under those laws, while prepared at any needful moment to cast off the restraint of ^{such} self imposed laws and enact or act a miracle. Thus I see my Father's hand in the flutter of the butterfly, and the eminent billowing of an earthquake; or rather I would prefer to say, in these and all other regular phenomena of force, action, life, I recognize his presence and power; himself acting mechanically; a servant to his own sempiternal dictation; — nature being, as it were, God's Instinct; its movements the involuntary functional action of His visible organism; While Miracle, prayer answering, Inspiration, and perhaps an infinite number of heavenly events ^{into} of which we are as yet uninitiated, are direct effects of His will; His voluntary action in, by & on the visible universe. I would they stand halfway between Babbage and Trumbull, and gave a hand to both. Prayer seems indeed to force us upon such a position. You know how hard a theme that is; but we must moot it; we must define and make our more definite our ideas in order better to love & practise the Truth. "Who's afraid?"

Has God promised to answer prayer? He is the hearer and answerer. "Make known unto Him your petitions, with thanksgiving." Yet the Church has been praying, Thy Kingdom Come, 1800 years. What are we to make of that fact?

I say that God has not — has never yet answered the prayer of his Church: the most steady, universal, hearty prayer His people ever uttered. Does this stagger you? Is it not a fact? "The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much." And the occasion when is noted; — when a man is sick or when he has grievously sinned and is temporarily chastised for it. Every such answer to prayer is a miracle and such miracles we ought now to look for and such are the true occasions of human mediatorial prayer. But more than this — God casts out none that come to Him through Christ. How? By prayer, in prayer; faith in such cases is prayer, the essence & disembodied soul of prayer, coming incarnate, conceived when intelligence dawns, born when thought is uttered — God is the hearer & answerer of such prayer. Every such answer is a miracle — of grace; — and of nature too.

But our long palavers, our paraphrastic "Thy Kingdom Come", our sermonized, perambulating, telling God all He knows & more too, and asking for everything we can think of, & everything we have forgotten — it is nonsense & mockery & God hears but never answers. We may pray forever so hard for the conversion of the world, & that "that glorious time may soon come" &c. and we waste breath; it will come when it will, in due time, in the latter day, at the end of the 1260 & 1290 years &c. Not sooner. I am not sure that the same may not be said of every part of the Church and every congregation. All our prayers won't bring a revival, although the contrary is so urged with tears from the pulpit. Where is there a passage in Scripture to prove that the prayers of the righteous shall effect a revival?

Our business then, David, is I think not to pray for such, but to wish it & work for it.

Observe the difference of diction. "Give (thou) us each day, sufficient bread! Forgive (thou) us our sins &c" "Lead (thou) us not into tempti-
on but deliver thou us from evil, for thou hast the power & will have
the glory." — The other runs "Our Father — Oh that thy Kingdom were
come! — Oh that thy will were done! — Would that thy name were hallowed!"

These are not prayers; they are simply desires. We know and
are persuaded that they will not be now, that our prayers and our
desires will not hasten them by one moment. The decree must run
its race, the development of Church & State, ruining earth and
ripening heaven, has its course; we long for it, & say so to him
who knows our heart thoughts — but we were children to pray for it.
We pray for other things, for bread & pardon & protection & goodness
and He hears us; and will not answer unless He hears a prayer.
The answer in each case is not in order of development, or fulfil-
ment of a decree, so much, as — a gift, a miracle, a present,
eccentric, voluntary divine action towards us. Otherwise we
might trust to law and development & decree & all that and
cease praying, instead of praying without ceasing.

Am I right, David? And if I am, to what conclusion
do I come? I hardly know, unless for a simple fact, viz. that
general prayer (so easy) is vain and not commanded; while
special prayer (so hard) is the only kind worth praying & worthy
of all faith. What will be, will be and I'll hope for it without
praying. What won't be, won't be, and therefore if I pray for it
I must do so hopelessly. But what maybe, maybe, and
I'll try what prayer ^{will} do for it, in Jesus name. As I
said, I believe, in a former letter, Faith is not believing the
willingness but of the power of Jesus, prayer, presupposing
his power, attacks his unknown purposes and strives to
settle it on our side. "Pray God — if perchance the thought of

"thy heart may be forgiven thee." "Man's mercy - for of those
evils, thou canst not make me clean." But when this will is known
then, "Cease to say this, for - the child shall die, or - I have
rejected saul & chosen a better".

Do we wish the world converted sooner than the Savior &
King wish it? Our longings for the loom & the now, are ~~wasteful~~
incidental to our weakness and shortsights. Shall we pray
for what Divine love & wisdom has prophesied arithmetic upon?
Will we have one of the piers that bridge Eternity, plucked up
& planted nearer to us, to shorten the span of the arch
we have begun to traverse?

Such prayers are idle. We have nothing as yet to do with
the end, but to like it & in our weakness long for it, (though it will
come soon enough); - What we have to do is our duty, now, and to
pray upon & for our daily wants. Lengthen hope, but shorten
prayer. Strengthen faith & condense prayer upon the present.
The future will take care of itself. We can affect it, with all
our prayers.

My views seem to grow clear as I write, for I write,
my heart's brother, as I think and speak to myself. I seem to
see the middle firmament & the waters gathering above & the
waters gathering below. The waters above are great waters; are
world events, the development of the universe, the nascent future
under force of decretal, Divinely instinctive, generic, cyclical, immutable
inevitable, unrolling Destiny & Eternal = universal law. The
waters below, the little waters of our daily, specific, momentary life,
subject to change, escaped from destiny, subject to prayer, liable to
miracles, the finite bycast of the infinite for Divine love to play
in & with at command of the breath of human want & wish. Here
is the home of Prayer - not there; below, not above; in the daily, not
in the eternal.